

CECAN Webinar:

The Human, Learning, Systems approach to managing in complexity



Tuesday 1st October 2019, 13:00 - 14:00 BST

Presenter: Dr Toby Lowe, Senior Lecturer in Public Leadership and Management, Newcastle Business School

Welcome to our **CECAN Webinar**.

All participants are muted. Only the Presenter, **Toby Lowe** and CECAN Chair, **Lisa Fletcher**, can speak. The webinar will start at **1pm BST**.

Toby will speak for around 45 minutes and will answer questions at the end.

Please submit your questions at any point during the webinar via the question box in the Zoom webinar control panel.

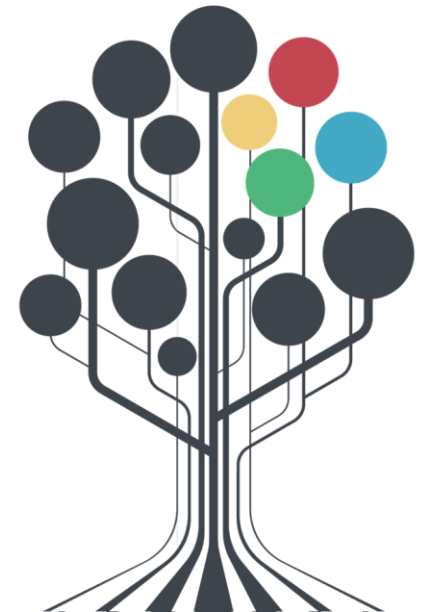
Today's webinar will be recorded and made available on the CECAN website.

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The Human Learning Systems approach to managing in complexity

Toby Lowe
Newcastle Business School
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#HumanLearningSystems



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Overview

- What is complexity?
- What does complexity mean for your work?



Human



Learning



Systems

- Building a movement for an HLS approach

Why is complexity relevant?

Our assertion:

Complexity is important because it describes the fundamental processes by which the **outcomes** we care about are made.

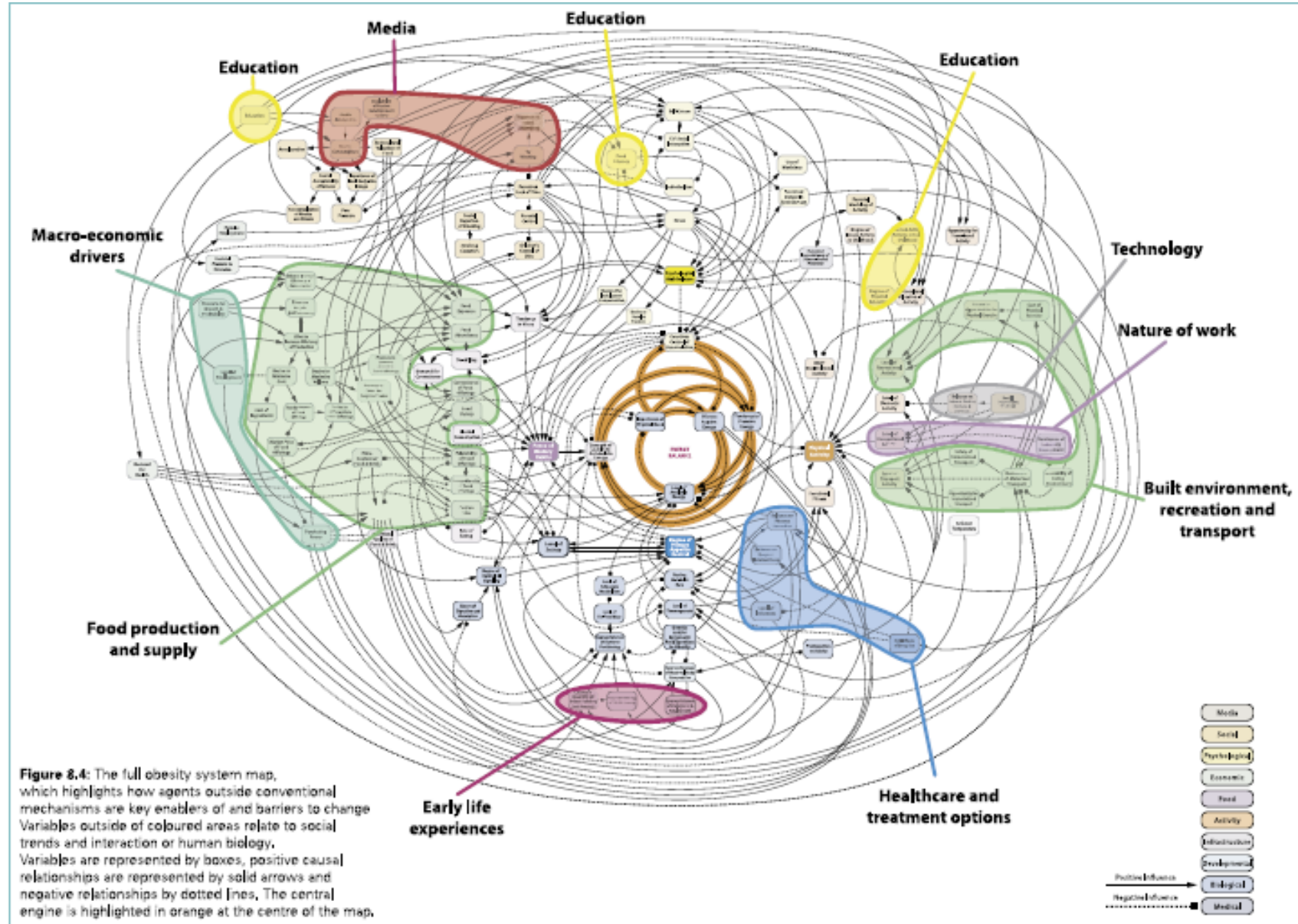
If we fail to understand and embrace complexity, we will not be able to create the outcomes we seek.



Complexity

We know we are in **complex** territory when:

- there are a **variety** of strengths and needs, and these look different from different perspectives
- when outcomes are being produced by **many factors interacting together in an ever changing way**
- when people are working in systems that are **beyond the control** of any one of the actors in the system





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Implications for Performance Management

**OUTCOMES ARE NOT DELIVERED BY
ORGANISATIONS!**

**The outcomes we desire are emergent
properties
of complex systems**

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What does complexity require of us?

- The capacity to respond to **variety** – each person's strengths and needs are different
- The ability to **adapt to change** – the context in which social interventions are undertaken constantly changes
- The ability to **shape systems** whose behaviour can't be reliably predicted, and which no one controls.



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A Whole New World: Funding and Commissioning in Complexity

Annabel Davidson Knight
Toby Lowe
Marion Brossard
Julie Wilson



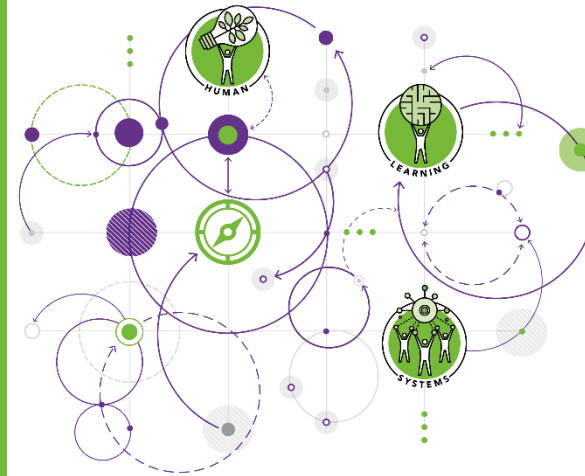
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Exploring the new world:

Practical insights for funding, commissioning
and managing in complexity

Toby Lowe
Dawn Plimmer



Key ideas

Funding, Commissioning and Managing in complexity involves:



Being **Human** to one another: put on your **VEST**



Learning and adaptation: improvement requires continuous learning



Systems: Nurture healthy systems to create positive outcomes – be a System Steward



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Human



To be Human, put on your VEST:

- Respond to **Variety** of human need and experience
- Use **Empathy** to understand the life of others
- View people from a **Strengths-based** perspective
- **Trust** people with decision-making

For Funders/Commissioners this means:

- Long term funding
- Funding without Performance Measures/KPIs – “core/unrestricted funding”
- Fund those organisations you trust to build effective human relationships with people – e.g. Plymouth – £80m, 10 year Alliance contract

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= Social action is Bespoke by Default

Each human being is recognised as having their own strengths and needs.

The job of social interventions is to:

- Hear and understand those strengths and needs through forming relationships with people
- Respond appropriately to those strengths and needs

“liberating” workers from attempts to proceduralise what happens in good human relationships, and instead focus on the capabilities and contexts which help enable these relationships”



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Learning



Current view: Learning is a phase in social innovation

- Learn & experiment.
- Find “what works”
- Do more of that



Young Foundation,
Stages of Social Innovation

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Learning



In a complex environment, **learning is a continuous process**

There is no such thing as “what works” – because “what works” is always changing.

“What works” is a continuous process of learning and adaption.

= funders and commissioners are “purchasing” the capacity for organisations to **learn and adapt**.



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Learning



“intended learning”

(we know what ‘good’ looks like, we want you to know it too)

VS

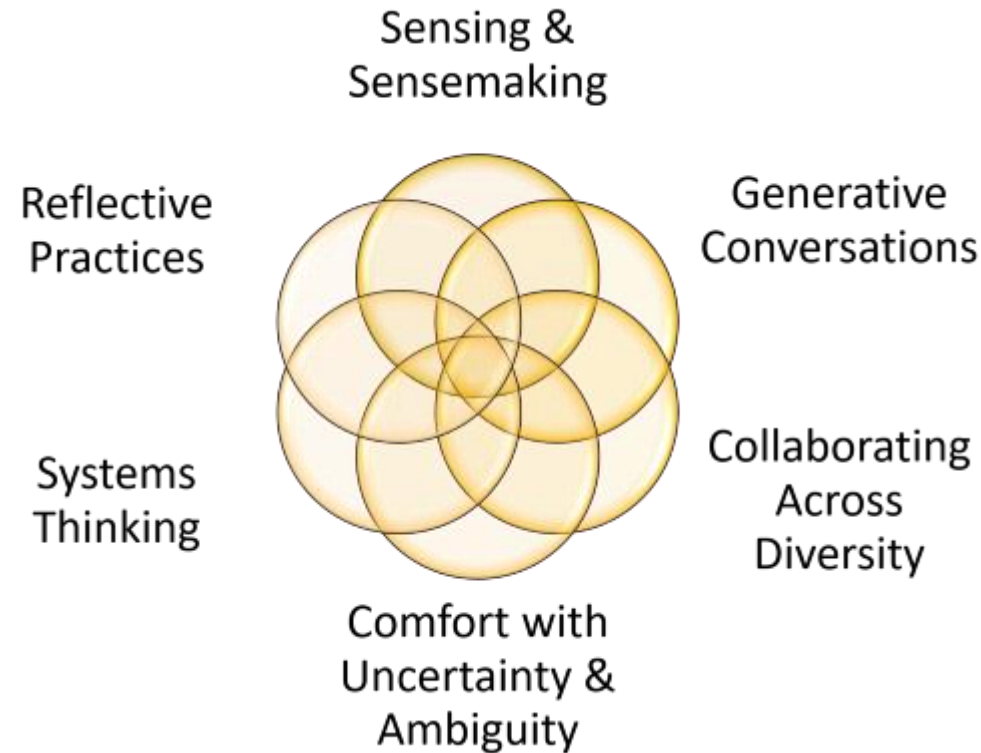
“emergent learning”

(what ‘good’ looks like keeps changing, we all need to keep up)



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Emergent learning



Sahana Chattopadhyay

<https://medium.com/activate-the-future/six-enablers-of-emergent-learning-a1b9390279a6>

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Learning

Learning is enabled by:

- Funding for learning, not 'results'
- Creating a learning culture:
 - Removing competition
 - Creating a positive error culture
 - Formal and informal spaces for learning
- Using data to learn





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Learning



Campbell's Law:

'The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor.'



Who looks after the health of a system?

Role of System Stewards

System Stewards

What does a healthy system look like?

System Behaviours (via Lankelly Chase Foundation):

Perspective

- People view themselves as part of an interconnected whole
- People are viewed as resourceful and bringing strengths
- People share a vision

Power

- Power is shared, and equality of voice actively promoted
- Decision-making is devolved
- Accountability is mutual

Participation

- Open, trusting relationships enable effective dialogue
- Leadership is collaborative and promoted at every level
- Feedback and collective learning drive adaptation



Do you know what the relevant system(s) look like?

- Who are the relevant actors?
- Do the actors in the system recognise it as a system?
- What are the relationships between those actors?

How do you know what the state of play with your system is?

- Who is acting as a **System Steward**?

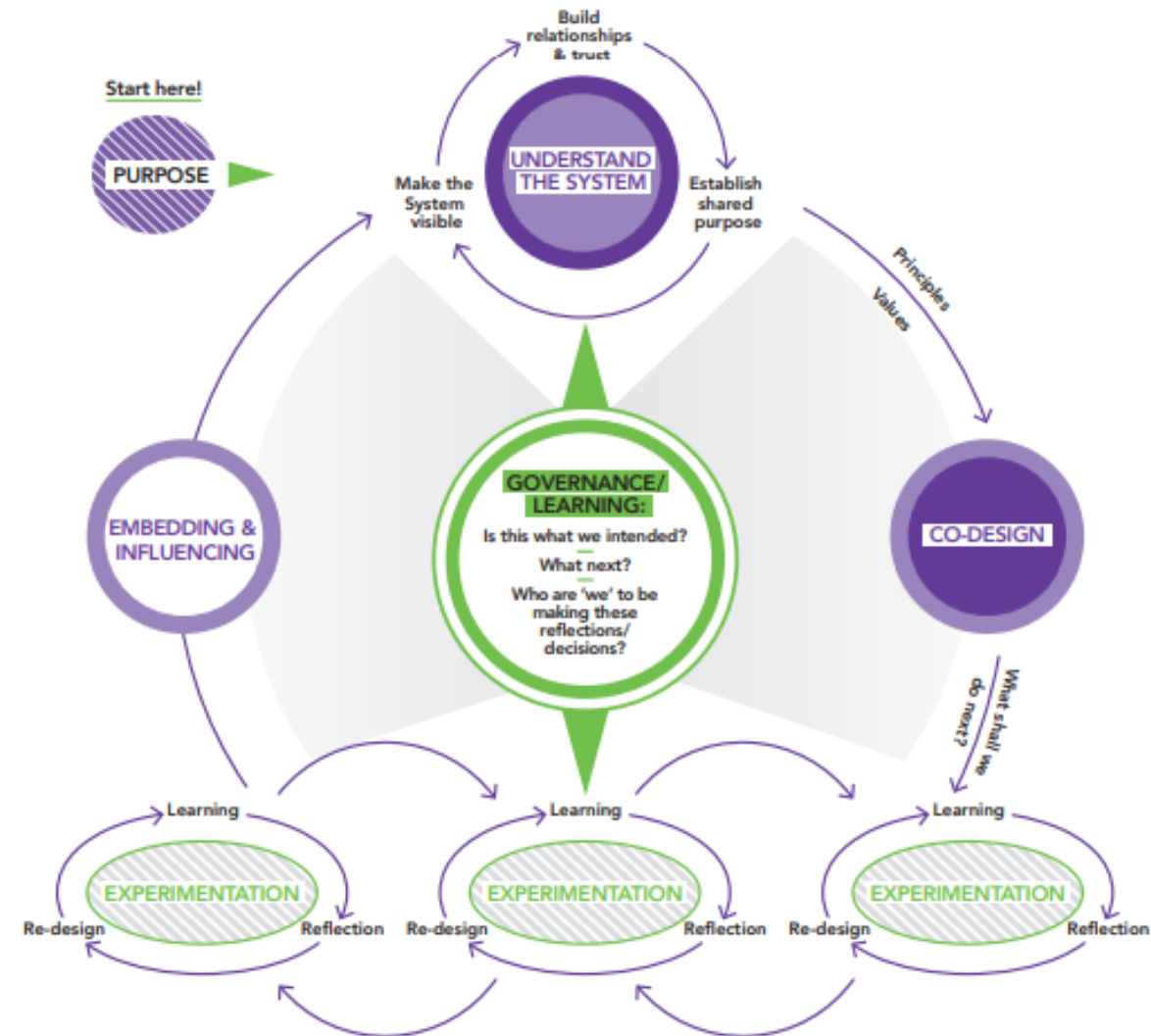
Accountability in HLS

Panic! If we don't have targets, how will the care system be accountable??

- 1) Targets don't create accountability. Targets create gaming.
- 2) Four changes that HLS creates for accountability:
 - **Form of accountability:** Accountability as dialogue
 - **Who** participates in accountability dialogue
 - **What counts as evidence** within accountability conversations
 - **What are we holding people accountable for?**
Accountability for the health of the system



How to commission differently

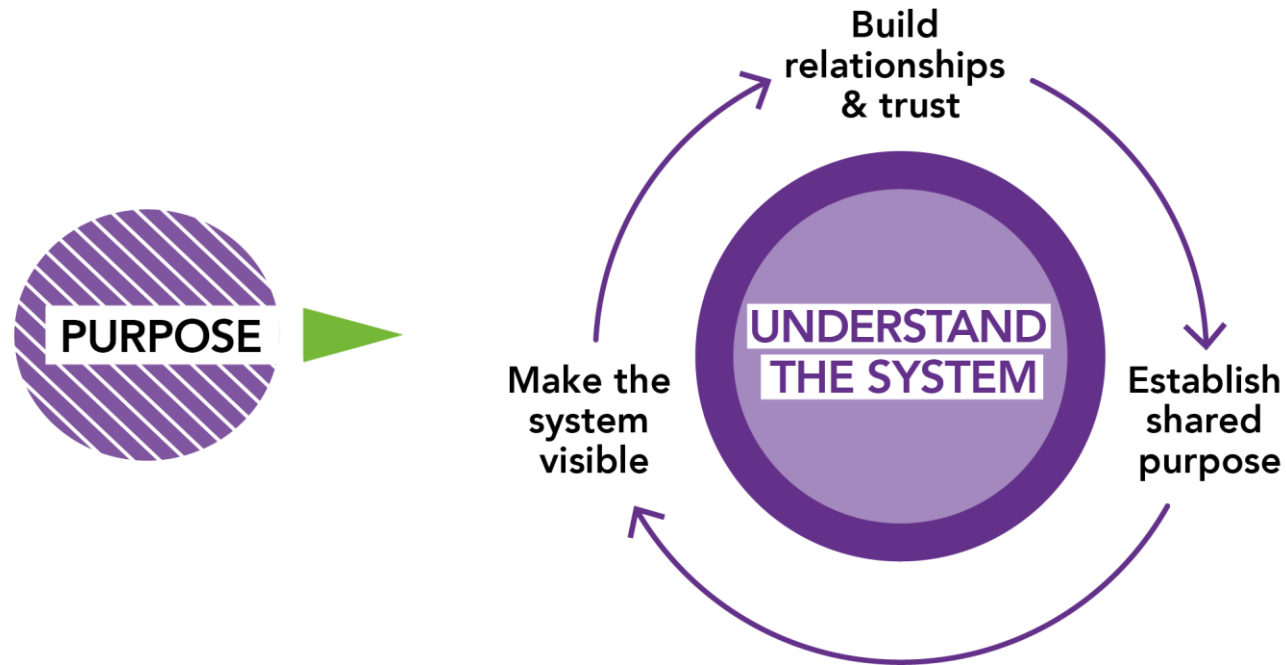




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Starting this process...

- What is your system's de facto purpose?
- How will you 'understand the system'?



Building a Movement – what's happening?

Research into what HLS practice looks like

e.g. Tudor Trust – what does it mean to be an HLS funder?

What are the implications for VCS organisations?

IVAR

Experiments in HLS practice

Plymouth, Liverpool, Nottingham, Surrey, Gloucs, Cornerstone and more...

New funding approaches

Save the Children, Ashoka, Losing Control

What can you do?

- Use **the language of Human Learning Systems**
- Act as a **champion**. How can use your leverage with others?
- **Explore** funding/managing in an HLS way. Where would you start?
- **Join with others**: “Complexities” group



<https://khub.net/group/complexity-friendly-system-oriented-commissioning-pilot-project>

- Over 300 leaders from across the world (mainly UK)
- Resources from other places
- Forum to ask questions

Thanks for listening

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@tobyjlowe

Questions?